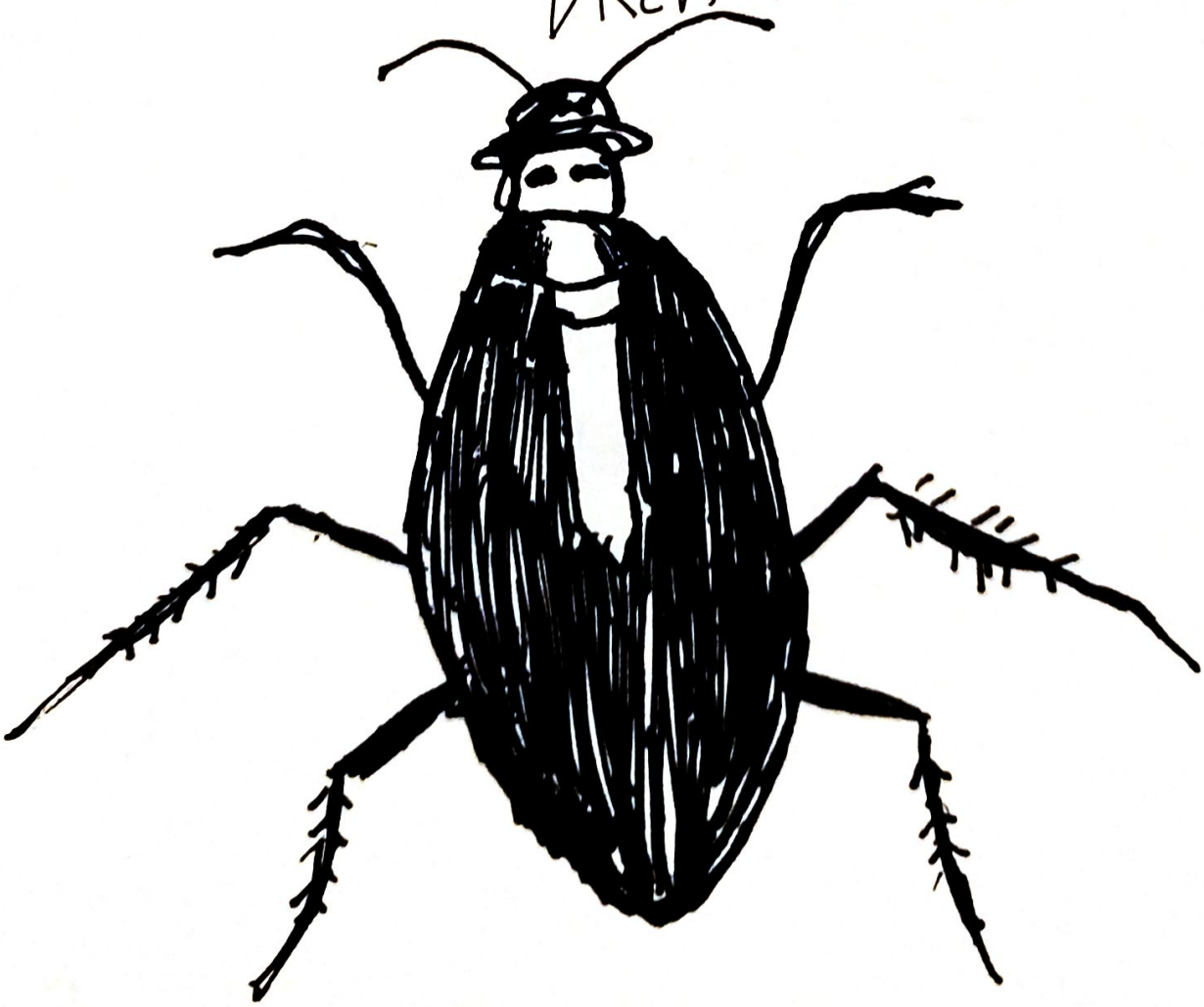
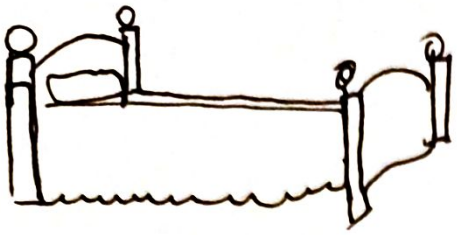
UNEASY

Gregor Samsa's
DREAM JOURNAL

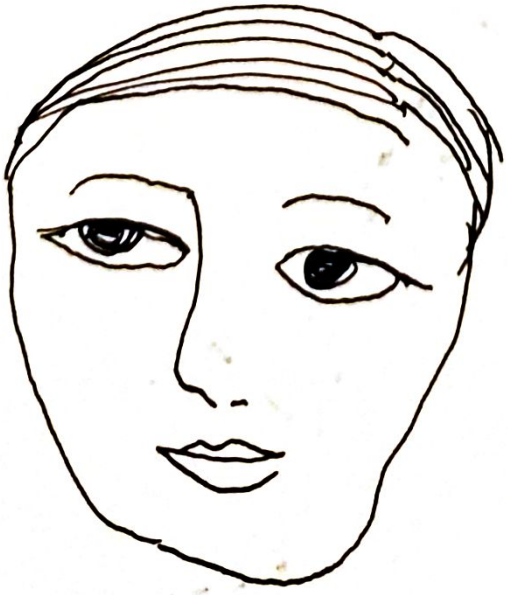




"AS GREGOR SAMSA WOKE ONE MORNING FROM UNEASY DREAMS, HE FOUND HIMSELF TRANSFORMED INTO SOME KIND OF MONSTROUS VERMIN."

FRANZ KAFKA,

THE METAMORPHOSIS



(Gregor's Transformation is about to begin...)

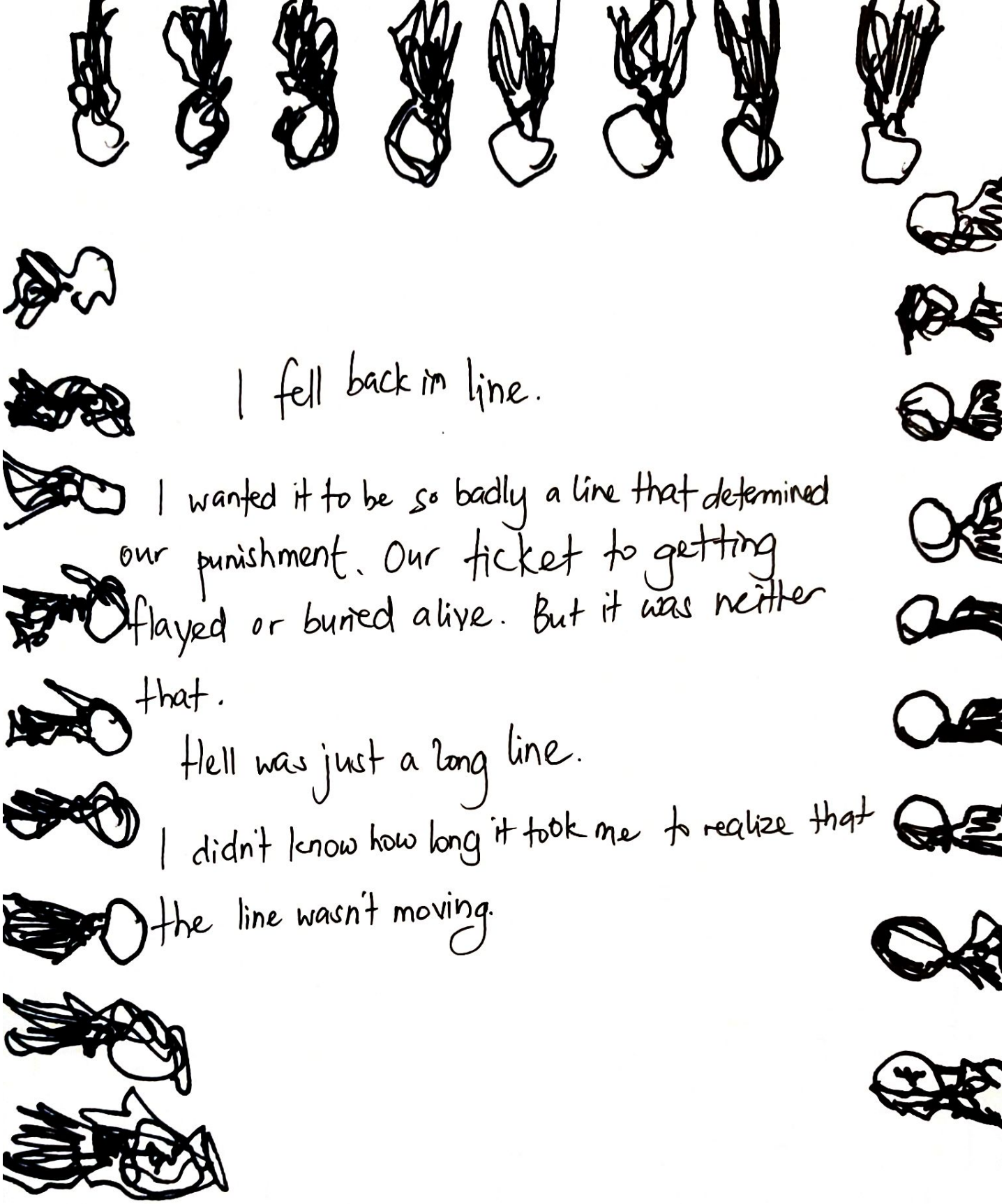
IN LIMBO

Hell was nothing like I expected. In most cases, they speak about fire and brimstone, so I've anticipated the fury of it all – the labyrinth of screams, the cords piercing both flesh and air, the euphoric waltz into a noose. Hell, I imagined, would be like an execution machine. However, it was nothing more than a long line.

Nobody screamed or murmured. There was only the sound of stamp pressing on paper. The cathartic release of its metal handle springing an alien dread into us. I was reminded of inspectors validating a ticket to the train or a movie theater. Only I couldn't tell where we were going.

I wondered what I did wrong and why I was meant to be in hell: I said my prayers. I did my work well. Now, I protested. I stepped out of line, attempting to talk to people. Nobody answered. I ran and ran and saw that the line had no entrance or exit.

It was strange. Instead of skulls or fingers, the walls were streamlined to obscure perfection. It was the kind of order you would see in an attempt to cover a murder.



I fell back in line.

I wanted it to be so badly a line that determined our punishment. Our ticket to getting flayed or buried alive. But it was neither that.

Hell was just a long line.

I didn't know how long it took me to realize that the line wasn't moving.

WATER SOUND

The sound of water is enough to send a man insane.

I was inside a chamber without doors or windows. I didn't understand how I ended up there. There was nothing else but the sound of water dripping. Sometimes I tried to shape out a code; other times, the sound reminded me of a deficient typewriter.

After a few hours (or days ???), a voice reverberated throughout the chamber. He asked me if I had time to repent for my crimes.

"I don't know why I'm here," I said.

I was left alone to listen to the water drip. It never ran out. The splatters assaulted my ears. I wanted to hear something, anything else. Something inside me was threatening to burst out. I needed to go out. I want out.

"It worked then," the voice said.

"No!" I exclaimed. "I just need to go to the bathroom. Please, let me!"

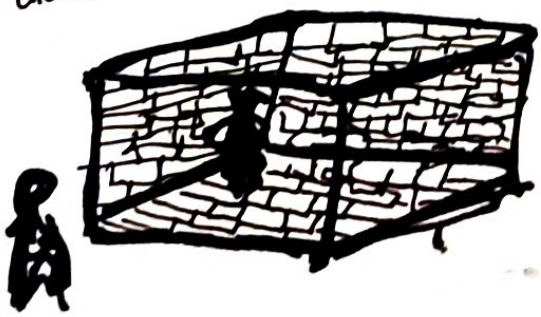
"You what?"

"The bathroom. That's all I need."

"What about your crimes?"

"I don't know – I just need to piss, really. Please, Sir, help me. I'll go back here, but please let me pee or I'll go mad!"

He didn't answer after that. The water kept dripping.



ATLAS

It was said that there were two people holding the earth. If one of them failed to function, the world would nearly come to an end, unless the other saves it in time.

It was a regular Friday morning when a debris from construction fell on one of those people. He died. The other was inside a tram, but the debris blocked its path, injuring multiple other people.

"I'm going to be late," the man said.

There were no other cabs or trams available, so he ran off to work. When he reached the place, the first window was already closed because the lady was on a break. He waited in line, hours behind his desired schedule.

The lady arrived, called him in, instructed him to go to the 6th floor to pay for a copy of his form. The man went there, but there was a long line. It took him an hour. When he went back to the lady, she was already on her lunch break. He waited another hour, not eating anything.

She returned after awhile. The man gave her the form, but she told him the paper length wasn't correct. He went back to the 6th floor. The paper size was all they had. He went back to the lady in the window but she was accommodating other people already.

"This is the only paper size they have," he told her.

The lady sighed and took the form. After awhile, she returned it and told her to go to the 3rd floor to register for a meeting with the Overseer.

Another long line. He waited and waited.

When it was his turn, he heard the door open and the overseer walked out. He was on a phone call.

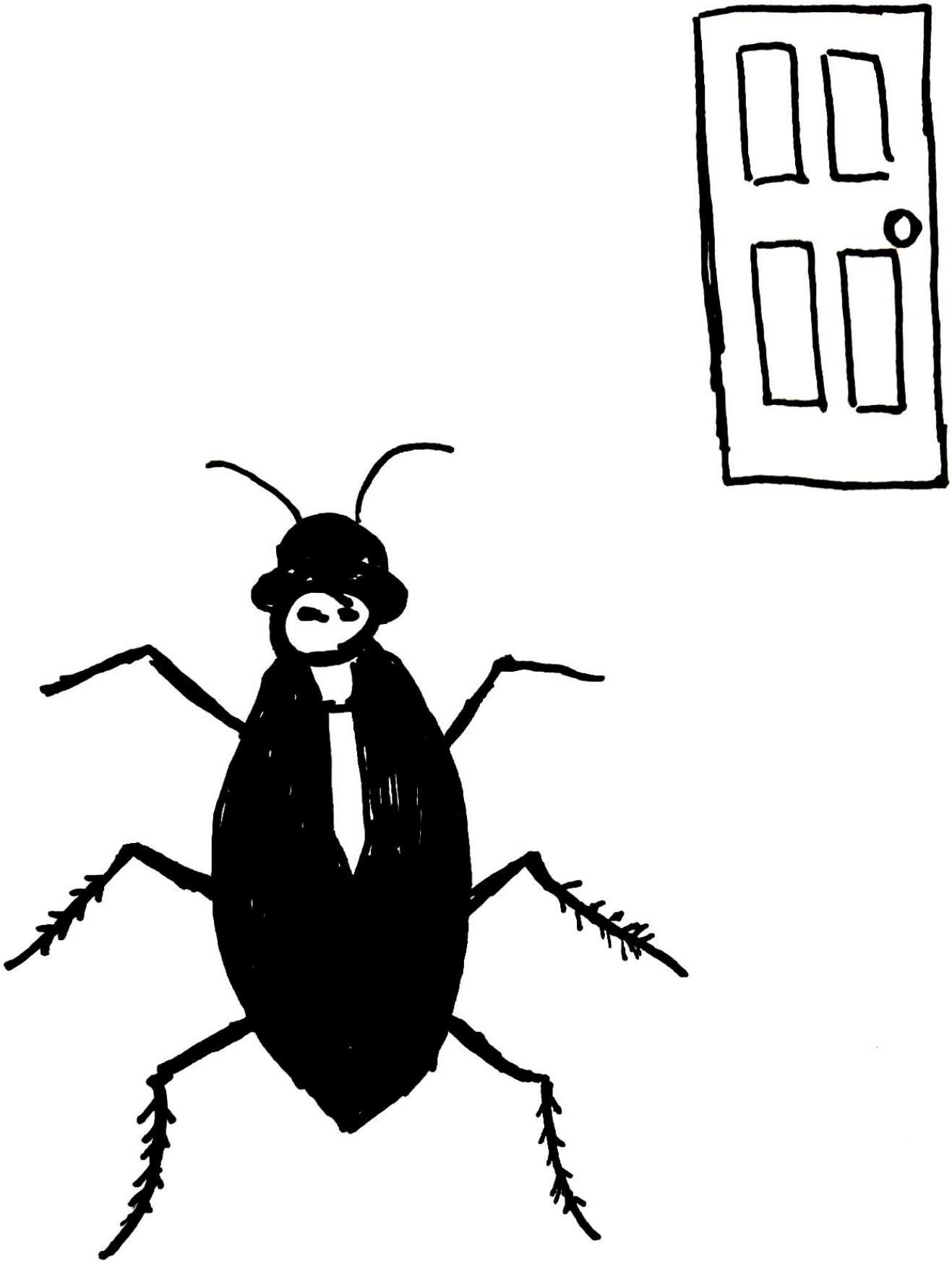
"He's in trouble? What – he caused a fallen debris?"

The secretary shut the log book. "I'm afraid he's no longer available today because his brother is in an urgent situation."

The man sighed. "But I need this. You don't understand – I need to make an appeal or else..."

But nobody listened to him. He went out to the street. The office hours ended at five. The sunset drained him, nauseated him. Having forgotten to drink or eat anything, blackness fell upon his eyes and the world around him.

There was nobody else to hold the world together.



THE AGE OF HUMANITY'S DECLINE.

THE UNCANNY VALLEY

The world functions on autopilot, but valleys also exist. These disrupt and violate the law of linearity, unhinging everybody into a cycle of fear beyond reason. Such a valley existed inside the train.

One of the passengers wasn't human.

I didn't notice it at first. She moved like a human, sat like one, gazed like one. It wasn't until I looked at her eyes that I saw that something about her was wrong.

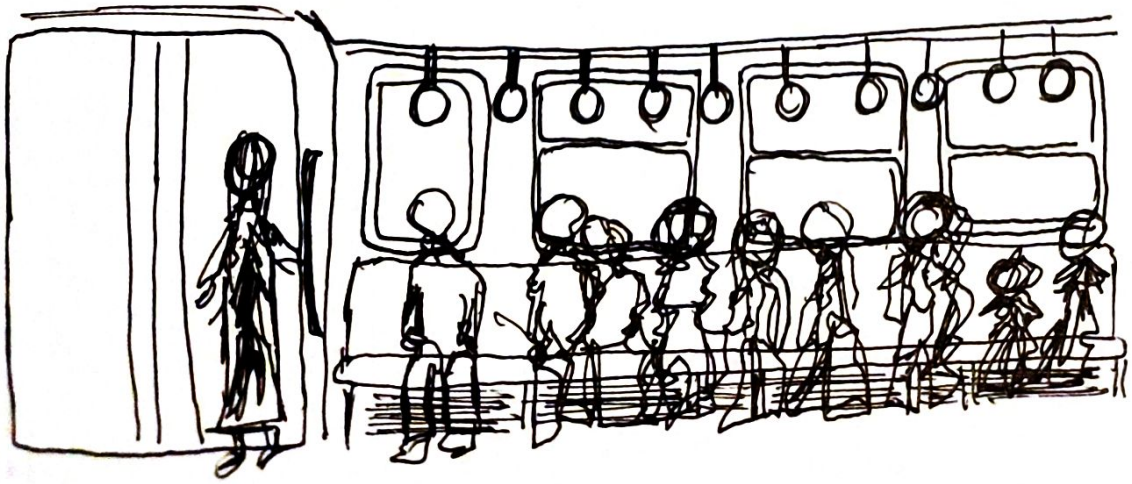
The subtleties didn't calculate. The slowness of her mouth, the waterlike movements of her hands. She looked at the other passengers as if she wasn't seeing flesh, but their insides. Something to annihilate. The way a leech is drawn to a vein. The more I looked at her, the more I started to fall back into my own person. My consciousness drowning in a cesspool, yet I was still inside the train.

THE ~~UNCANNY~~ VALLEY (Gregor's transformation is about to end)

My body only existed, but I was gone and I couldn't speak nothing nothing comes out my mouth is locked and I couldn't feel my legs my wrist I no longer have a body I float in a space where the walls close in on me shoes seem to be after me everything ~~out~~ to kill me and I can't remember my name anymore but no I was still there and I was was human am human and she had to be stopped or else the world will fall in on itself make no room for her lock her out but I no longer am how could I stop her stop her I can't think feel anymore I don't think I ever existed and there's no way out of this abyss say what you will some call it fear others call it nothingness there is something lorelier watching me us and that thing is a creature as old as time but there is no name no name no time nothing to reach out to and I was there but I never was can you hear me

can you hear me

I think I missed my stop.



Gregor Dreams of Music

"Could he be an animal, to be so moved by music?"

-Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis

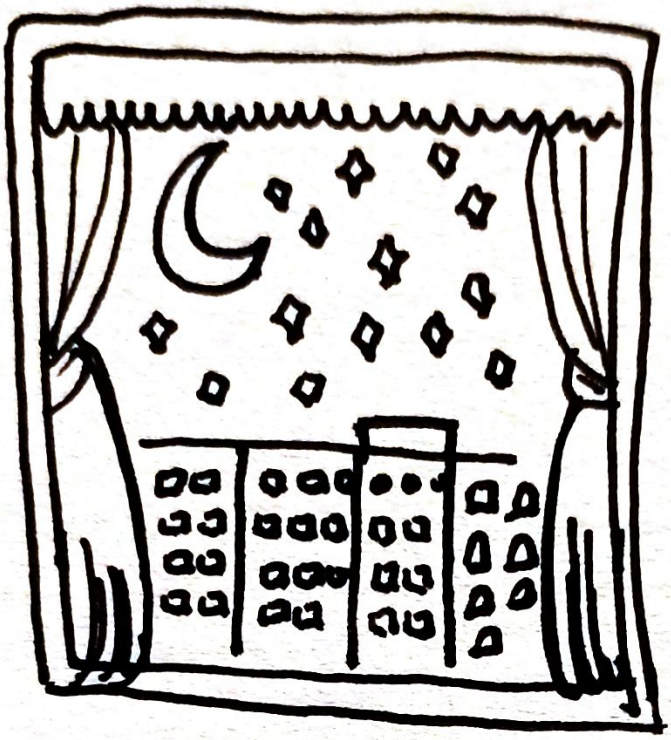
Beauty is a hunger,
as well as a famine. I mark the seasons,
dry bored. She strikes a note,
and the note transforms into spring.

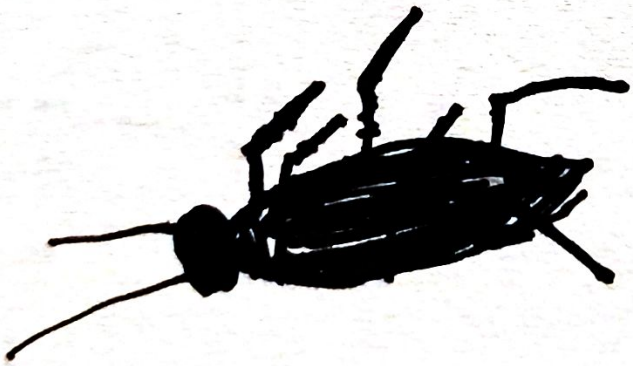
Tonight the windows are stars,
the lightbulb the moon. Columns of notes
soar higher than a staircase, until it untucks the sky
the way a mother wakes a child.

Wake, God says. And I wake up, inhuman.
God smiles at me. A creation, a melody unhinged.
I too understand that jewels fall from songs,
that there is a heart on the other side
of the walls we built to keep ourselves in line.
Animal-hearted and tamed. Music is a seed
we swallowed. When morning comes,

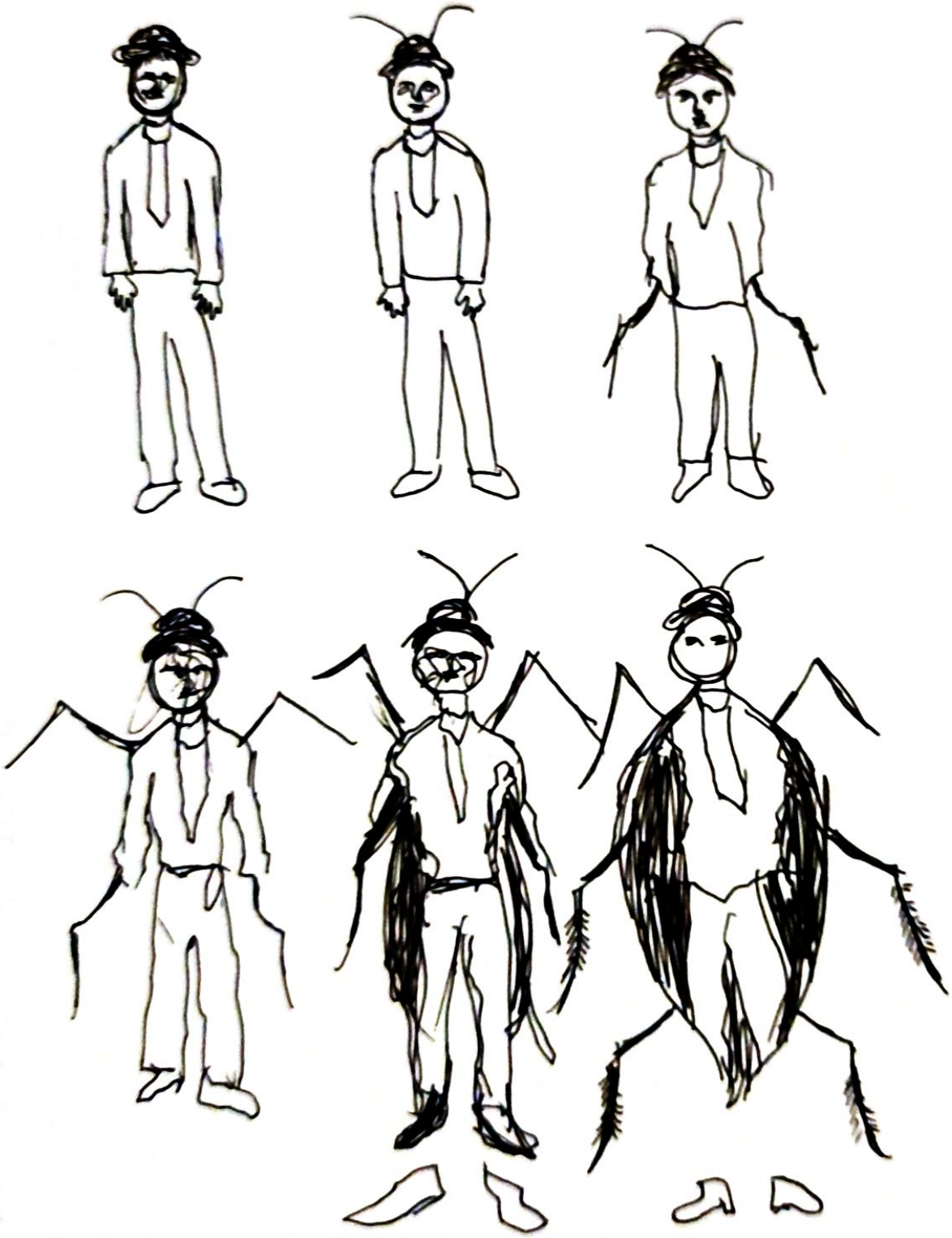
it is gone. Love must be
the station no train stops over. There are other
ways to breathe, and I take mine tonight,
forgetting that I am a criminal for letting
myself be. Seasons gather inside the room,

and I wait before it turns into a storm, embracing
the blossoms of tenderness and sorrow, before
I wind up dead.





SURELY, THERE MUST BE A PLACE KINDER THAN THIS.



METAMORPHOSIS.